

again anchored overnight at Careening Bay. Although I was not on board, a fellow bird-watcher, Maurice O'Connor (also on the previous visit – 9 May 2008) recorded no more than 30 Pied Imperial Pigeon in the area, and no movement into Careening Bay from the Coronation Islands. This may have been due to the freshwater seepage having dried up. The only other freshwater in the area known to us, was a small spring fed pool surrounded by tall grass. It was beneath a dense canopy of trees on a creek situated several hundred metres inland from the main beach at Careening Bay. This had reduced considerably in the interim.

Pied Imperial Pigeon are not the only bird species to commute between the mainland and the Coronation Islands. On a number of occasions I have recorded Red-tailed Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus banksii*) doing likewise. Early on the morning of 15 July 1997, while anchored in Careening Bay aboard the *Sea Lion* (during a *Landscape Expedition* along the Kimberley coast) our group recorded many hundreds of Red-tailed Black Cockatoo flying from the mainland to the Coronation Islands. Three days later when anchored further up the coast at sunset, we received communication from another vessel, *Coral Princess*, informing us they were anchored in Careening Bay, and above them were hundreds of Red-tailed Black Cockatoo flying

from the Coronation Islands to the mainland. At the time we concluded there must have been a good source of food on the islands to warrant the birds making this flight each day.

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Migratory Little Friarbirds – In Western Australia the Little Friarbird (*Philemon citreogularis*) is restricted to the Kimberley Division. Little is known of its migratory habits. It is variously considered to be resident, nomadic or partly nomadic, fluctuating in numbers in response to flowering of food plants (Higgins *et al.* 2001. *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. Volume 5: Tyrant-flycatchers to Chats.* Oxford University Press, Melbourne).

On 8 May 2008 at 7.15am, while on an expedition with *Coates Wildlife Tours* along the Kimberley coast aboard the charter vessel, *Flying Fish 5*, I was in one of three accompanying dinghies (with 14 other passengers) observing a saltwater crocodile feeding on fish on the southern bank of the Prince Regent River (about 15°34'16"S 125°13'75"E). At this time I looked across to the northern bank about 600m away and noticed a large number of birds, which I identified as Little Friar-birds, following the course of the Prince Regent upstream in

an easterly direction. This I brought to the attention of the group, and as the birds appeared to be in a migratory pattern, we decided to position the dinghies toward the northern bank for closer observation.

At this point the Little Friarbirds were flying just above a narrow belt of mangrove trees lining the Prince Regent River and at the back of this belt leading up to a rocky slope were a few *Eucalyptus miniata* trees. There was a continuous straggly stream of birds flying past – some flying singly and others in small flocks (5–6 up to 30–40). Occasionally single birds or a flock would land in branches of higher trees back from the mangroves and pause for a few moments before continuing their flight. Before having to return in the dinghies to *Flying Fish 5* at 8.00am, I counted almost 2,000 Little Friarbird flying past with no end to the migration in sight. At 9.00am when leaving the area in *Flying Fish 5*, there was no sign of any birds.

It is not known how long the Little Friarbirds were in flight before being noticed at 7.15am. However at 6.00am it was daylight and other birds were active. Taking into account the Little Friarbirds were first sighted from the south side of the river before we moved to the north side and started a bird count, and the birds were still flying past when we returned to *Flying Fish 5*, a

conservative estimate would be 3,000–4,000 Little Friarbirds were taking part in the migration.

The migratory flight of Little Friarbirds followed a narrow belt of no more than about 50m (at this point) along the northern bank of the Prince Regent River. It did not extend higher up the slopes away from the river. No birds were in flight along the southern side of the river. The migration did not involve other bird species or resident Little Friarbirds. From where the birds came or where they were headed was a mystery, as there was no flush of flowering trees such as *Eucalyptus miniata* or *Grevillea pteridifolia* that is usually associated with large numbers of these birds moving into an area. At the time neither of these trees showed any sign of blossom along the coast or up the river and creek systems. Apart from *Xanthostemon paradoxus*, a few *Melaluca leucadendra* and *Grevillea refracta* just coming into blossom, there was little to account for such a large influx of birds to the area. On 13 May 2008 when at King George River further north along the coast, it was interesting to find Silver-crowned Friarbirds to be common – attracted to profusely flowering *Xanthostemon paradoxus*, but no Little Friarbirds were recorded.

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